

De : UNESCOPRESSE

Envoyé : mardi 5 décembre 2017 11:38

Objet : International study concludes reading literacy on the rise

*Joint UNESCO-IEA Press release N°2017-143*

### **International study concludes reading literacy on the rise**

Amsterdam/Paris, 5 December 2017 – Reading literacy is on the rise internationally – in 2016, 96 percent of fourth graders from over 60 education systems achieved above the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2016 low international benchmark. This is one of the key findings of a report released today by the International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

To show how large-scale assessments, such as PIRLS, can contribute to achieving the education goal of the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda, UNESCO and IEA have also released a joint guidance booklet “Measuring SDG 4: how PIRLS can help”.

Conducted by IEA, PIRLS provides internationally comparative data and trends in the reading achievement of fourth graders from more than 60 education systems. In 2016, the scope of PIRLS was extended to include ePIRLS – an innovative assessment of online reading. The ePIRLS assessment concluded that good readers have an advantage in digital literacy skills, with 50% of students deemed good to excellent readers reaching the PIRLS high international benchmark.

An early start in reading literacy has lasting benefits, with students who had attended pre-primary school for three years or more reporting higher average scores. Supportive home environments, where parents often engage their children in early literacy activities, are also associated with higher achievement scores.

In 2016, female students outperformed their male counterparts in 48 countries and dependent territories by an average of 19 points. Such disaggregated data can inform progress [toward Education 2030](#) target 4.5, which calls to “leave no one behind”.

Finally, the report indicated that safe and well-resourced learning environments with qualified teachers are associated with higher achievement scores. PIRLS 2016 identified a positive trend in school safety, with teachers from 16 countries and dependent territories reporting that schools have become safer and more orderly since 2011.

The UNESCO-IEA booklet also launched as part of today’s international PIRLS 2016 release, provides some examples to demonstrate how the achievement and background data collected by PIRLS can help inform national policies in education and learning, and measure progress toward Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 targets in Education.

SDG4 targets analysed in the booklet include target 4.1 on primary education, 4.2 on early childhood development, 4.4 on skills for work, 4.5 on gender equality and inclusion, 4.a on effective learning environments and 4.c on teachers.

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Watch live in [English](#) or in [French](#)

Download the [UNESCO-IEA joint booklet](#)

Download the [PIRLS and ePIRLS 2016 International Reports \(link is external\)](#)

Download the [detailed factsheet on the 2016 findings and discover how PIRLS can help monitor SDG4 targets](#)

**About PIRLS:** *IEA's Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is an international assessment of reading comprehension that has reported trends in student achievement every five years since 2001. The study represents the worldwide standard for measurement of students' reading comprehension at grade 4. ePIRLS is an innovative computer-based assessment of online informational reading. [Learn more](#)*

**About IEA:** *The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), headquartered in Amsterdam, is an independent, international cooperative of national research institutions and governmental research agencies. It conducts large-scale comparative studies of educational achievement and other aspects of education, with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the effects of policies and practices within and across systems of education. [Learn more](#)*

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